

as the channel of redeeming truth, their journeying toward Jerusalem and their worshipping in Bethlehem speak the value of a voluntary commitment and personal devotion to Jesus Christ.

Note what they sought: Where is he? Not the creed of the Rabbi, not the ritual of the Priest, but the Person of Christ—this is their quest.

So you and I, in the far-away land of our wandering see his star, in that hour we remember the promise of God, the hope of Israel; then we turn our faces toward the city of the King and are not satisfied at Jerusalem with its rabbinic creed or its priestly ritual, but press on to Bethlehem that we may worship at the feet of the King.

Striking is the contrast between the wise men and the Scribes—the one possessed living inspiration, the other dead knowledge. The Scribes knew that in Bethlehem the Christ should be born—the Wise Men, knowing not the place, knew that the Christ already lived.

Striking also is the contrast between Herod and the Magi: it is the difference between dead orthodoxy and living faith. The King was careful of Jewish tradition and established belief: the Wise Men were concerned about Jesus Christ.

As time passed the fruits of these contrasting attitudes are seen. Promptly the living inspiration and faith laid its gold and frankincense and myrrh at the Master's feet. While, with a hate that was almost devilish, dead knowledge and orthodoxy sought to kill the Christ. From the cry that arose in Bethlehem as Rachel refused to be comforted until the cross was planted with its burden and the sword pierced Mary's soul, the Scribes and Herods daily registered their hatred toward the living truth.

Ah, yes, we need a living faith that follows the light. My brother, if in high success, or in deep failure, if in great joy, or in desolating bereavement, if in any hour you see the star, do thou arise and seek the King in Bethlehem.

IV. The First Christmas Gifts.

Not empty-handed did these Magi come. "Opening their treasures they offered unto him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh." These were the first Christmas gifts.

When we look out upon the world as it celebrates the Birthday of the King there is much to sadden us. Already we have thought upon its revelry, its debauchery, its vain glory, and even in its gifts it stands condemned. The cruel tyranny of custom has robbed the Christmas season of its best.

The sweet practice of sending a love token at this time of joy has degenerated into heartless barter. We pay our debts—we make investments—we present costly gifts to the rich who need them not; perchance, if we are very good, we give a pittance to the poor.

Let us declare our Christian independence. Tonight, let us learn the secret of true Christmas gifting and live what we have learned.

If it were your birthday, and men gave gifts to one another forgetting you, would you thus be honored? If then, it be Christ's birthday, should not the offer-

ings of our love he laid at his feet.

To this question, which can receive but one answer, we add another, where can we find him?

I hold every gift that brightens childhood, every token that seals friendship, every offering that ministers to want, made in his name, I hold this a "Birthday Present" to the King.

The Wise Men at Bethlehem laid their gold, and frankincense and myrrh at his feet. The Other Wise Man, whom Henry Van Dyke so beautifully pictures, Aratban of Ecbatana, laid also his offering at those blessed feet.

Delayed by ministries of love, he failed to meet his comrades as they followed the star. Through more than thirty years he sought the Saviour among the lowly, ministering ever to their need. Old and broken he died in the streets of Jerusalem at that very hour in which Christ died beyond the city wall. He had failed to find the Saviour, whom he sought.

Even his gifts were gone. His sapphire, his ruby, his pearl—had been used to save from death a sick man in the desert, to save from the sword a babe in Bethlehem, to save from slavery a maiden in Jerusalem.

As the grateful maiden bent over the dying Magi—she heard him murmur. "Not so, my Lord. For when saw I these an hungered, and fed thee? Or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw I thee a stranger, and took thee in? Or naked, and clothed thee? When saw I thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? Three and thirty years have I looked for thee; but I have never seen thy face, nor ministered to thee, my King."

And the maiden heard a sweet voice, saying:

"Verily, I say unto thee, inasmuch as thou hast done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, thou hast done it unto me."

As then, so now there is no real difficulty in finding Jesus Christ, that at his feet we may lay our gifts.

We shall be sadly misled, if we fail to note the steps taken by the Wise Men who brought their treasures. They came—they worshipped—they offered gifts. First they gave themselves—then gold and frankincense and myrrh. Richer by far was the first gift. Poor would the treasures have been in the eye of God, if the hands that bore them were unsundered. Self is the supreme gift that Christ desires.

OH, CENTURIES UNBORN!

John Richard Moreland.

Oh, centuries unborn, 'tis not for thee
To let a wondrous star thy skies adorn,
Like that which shone o'er Bethlehem,
Telling the world that Christ was born.

Oh, centuries unborn, thou may'st bring
Wonders and sights we can not understand,
But thou canst never sing so sweet a song
As "Peace on earth, good will to man."

Oh, centuries unborn, no mother mild
Shall hush to sleep a child so sweet,
Nor wise men travel miles on miles
To worship at an Infant's feet.

Oh, star! Oh, song! Oh, mother mild!
Oh, Babe divine! Oh, Christmas morn!
Time can not bring so grand a gift
Unto the centuries unborn.